



Stapleton

SPEAK UP

The Meridian Star asked these local residents what they would say to military personnel serving overseas if they could send them a message.

"I would tell them they are in my prayers, and I hope they come back soon. I have three cousins serving in Iraq and I am ready for them to come home."

Evelyn Stapleton, 39
substitute teacher

"I'd tell them that I appreciate what they are doing and I hope they come home safely."

James Vance, 45
land surveyor

"We love you and kick butt."

Joe Alling, 39
former Marine



Alling

"Keep up the good work. I appreciate your sacrifices and may God be with you."

Ken Philagarski, 36
software evaluator

"I'd tell them that I care for them even though I don't know anyone who is serving over there. I appreciate what they are doing and realize that they are putting themselves in danger."

Debra Baylor, 32
nursery employee



Baylor

Behind every great sailor ...

Tasheé Williams is a junior at Meridian High School. Her parents are Charles and Jackie Williams and she has three siblings, Charles Jr., Charleston and Taylor. Tasheé attends Canaan Missionary Baptist Church. She enjoys reading, playing the xylophone and traveling and wants to be a physical therapist someday.

Her story is about how her aunt and uncle keep their marriage strong, despite being separated for long periods of time. Angelia Wallace is from Meridian, but now lives in Norfolk, Va., with her husband — Cory Wallace, a 28-year-old supplies specialist in the U.S. Navy.

During their young marriage, Angelia has discovered she's a lot stronger than she thought.

By Tasheé Williams

special to The Star

Can a person imagine what it would be like to have a husband thousands and thousands of miles away from home? To constantly wonder if he is safe from harm?

You never know what a person goes through until you have walked a mile in their shoes.

My Aunt Angie did not know she was going to have to endure as the wife of a sailor until shortly after she and Cory were wed. After six months of marriage, Cory had to leave my aunt and their infant daughter.

Such an unexpected calling meant my aunt had to cope with a lot of changes — emotional, self-reliance and financial.

Focusing on the positive

At times, situations seemed difficult for my aunt, and she seemed to get down-and-out about it.

With no support from her spouse, and no family around, she realized that no matter how bad things started to look, she had to be strong — not only for herself, but for her child as well.

As a source of encouragement, she felt the best thing was for her not to focus on all the negatives that could happen while her husband was away, but the positives.

Instead, she would channel all her energy into keeping their relationship great and looking forward to him coming home as often as possible. My aunt and uncle vowed to keep their communication lines open and their relationship strong because they are a team now.

She is thankful for the bond they have together because, when there is so much distance between spouses, communication is vital. Another change my aunt had to cope with was self-reliance.



Williams



SUBMITTED PHOTO

THE WALLACES

Angelia Wallace is from Meridian, but lives in Norfolk, Va., now with her U.S. Navy husband, Cory, and her daughter, Makayla.

Learning self-reliance

Shortly after my aunt and the love of her life were wedded and moved away from home, my Uncle Cory was called to be on duty for nine months.

It was really unexpected because the purpose of them moving away from home was so that he could be closer to his station — but he was called to somewhere closer to home, which was really upsetting. If he had known that, they would not have moved in the first place.

Left alone with a baby girl in a state with no family anywhere around to help, my aunt did what she had to do. She maintained a full-time job with running the household with no help and assuming total care of her child.

With my aunt being a social worker, she works a lot of hours and the tremendous amount of responsibility she had made it difficult.

Running the household

The most difficult change for my aunt was financial. Running a household on her own was a real change because she did not really know how to, but she learned quickly.

With my uncle not being around, she had to pay utility bills, buy groceries and, with a baby around, she had to buy diapers and clothes.

As a full-time employee, she had to rely on a daycare to take care of her daughter because of the type of hours she worked.

The hardest change about self-reliance for my aunt was having to assume both parental roles while her husband was away on duty. Even though it is hard, she learned to get tough because there was no time to cry about the situation.

Keep holding on

I would like to say that behind every great sailor or soldier is a great woman.

At times, my aunt felt like throwing in the towel, but she knew she had to stay strong. My aunt really tries not to focus on the negatives while my uncle is away, but on the joy of him coming home.

Financial stability is the most dramatic change because of all the responsibilities she is having to take on.

One thing I have learned from my aunt's situation is that trials and tribulations come to make a person strong. And, regardless of what may happen, keep holding on.